

# LIVING ORTHODOXY





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**Cover illustration:** Reproduction of an icon of St. John of Damascus published by Holy Transfiguration Monastery; 278 Warren St.; Brookline, MA 02146

## **The Life of our Venerable Father John of Damascus**

*Whose Memory the Holy Church Celebrates on the 4th of December*

The venerable John Damascene was born in Damascus, the capitol of Syria, to eminent and pious parents, whose ardent faith in Christ, tested amid trials and tribulations, was strong and more precious than gold tried in the fire. Their time was one of misfortune. The Saracens had conquered that land and, having taken their glorious city, brought great calamity upon the Christians, slaying some, selling others into slavery, and allowing no one to confess Christ openly. At that time, the parents of John, protected by the providence of God, were preserved in safety and health with all their property; and they kept the Holy Faith, for God made it possible for them to win the favor of the Saracens, as once Joseph had that of the Egyptians and Daniel that of the Babylonians, so that the ungodly Moslems did not forbid the parents of the holy one to believe in Christ and glorify His holy name openly. Moreover, they appointed the father of the holy John a judge of the city and commissioner of private construction. [His name was also John, and he was given by his Moslem overlords the Arabic surname "al-Mansur", which means "he who has been washed clean", a name which also passed to John.] Living in such prosperity, he did much good for their Christian brethren: he ransomed captives, freed from bondage those who were incarcerated in prisons and delivered them from death, and extended a helping hand to all who suffered. In the midst of the Moslems, the parents of the venerable one were like beacons in the night, like seed in Israel, like embers glowing amid the ashes. And they were preserved by God, that through them there might shine forth a beacon in the Church of Christ, clearly shedding its light upon the whole world: the blessed John of Damascus. Having given birth to him in the flesh, they made haste also to make him a child of the light through baptism, which was a very difficult thing to accomplish at that time. The Moslems permitted no one to receive baptism, but the parents of the saint gave new life to their child through baptism without hesitation and gave him the name which signifies the grace of God. The father of the boy took great care to raise him in good teaching and taught him not the customs of the Saracens, nor military prowess, nor how to hunt game, nor any other worldly art, but rather meekness, humility, the fear of God and the knowledge of the divine Scriptures. He therefore earnestly besought God to send his son a wise and pious man who would be a good teacher and instructor in good works for the child. And the plea of the saint's father was heard by God, and he received that which he desired in the following manner.

The brigands of Damascus made frequent raids, by land and by sea, on the neighboring countries, made captive many Christians and, bringing them back to their own city, sold some into slavery in the market-places and put others to death. One day, they chanced to capture a certain monk by the name of Cosmas, an Italian by birth, noble of mien and most beautiful of soul. They decided to sell him in the slave-market with the other captives. Those whom the brigands wished to behead, falling at the feet of that monk, besought him with tears to pray to God for their souls. Seeing the honor which those who were condemned to death accorded the monk, the Saracens asked him what rank and honor he

had enjoyed among the Christians in his native land. And he replied: "I had no rank, and was not even counted worthy of the priesthood; I am only a sinful monk, schooled in philosophy, and not only that of the Christians, but also that which the pagan thinkers contrived."

Having said this, the monk wept bitterly. Not far off stood the father of John. Seeing the elder weeping, and perceiving from his vesture that he was a monk, he approached him and, wishing to console him amid his grief, said: "In vain, O man of God, dost thou weep over the loss of the world which thou long ago renounced and to which thou hast died, as I see from thine aspect and raiment!"

"I weep," answered the monk, "not over the loss of the world — for I have died to it, as thou sayest — and I care not for anything earthly, knowing that there is another, better life, immortal and everlasting, prepared for the servants of Christ, which I also hope to receive with God's help. Rather, I weep because I shall depart this life childless, leaving behind me no heir."

John's father was astonished at the monk's words, and said: "Father, thou art a monk who hast consecrated thyself to God to preserve thy purity, and not to beget children. Wherefore grieveest thou over children?"

The monk replied: "Thou dost not comprehend what I have said, lord: I am not speaking of a fleshly son and a worldly inheritance, but of things spiritual. As thou thyself canst see, I am a poor monk and possess nothing; yet I have a great wealth of wisdom with which I have enriched myself, laboring, with God's help, from the years of my youth. I have mastered the various human sciences: I have learned rhetoric, dialectic, the philosophy taught by Aristotle and Plato; I know geometry and music; I have studied with thoroughness the movement of the heavenly bodies and the course of the stars, so that through the beauty of creation and its most wise structure I am able to arrive at a clearer understanding of the Creator Himself; and finally, I have learned well the teaching on the mysteries of Orthodoxy set down by Greek and Roman theologians. Yet while possessing such knowledge myself, I have transmitted it to no one else, and that which I have learned I now cannot teach, for I have neither time, nor disciple, and I am certain that I shall die here by the sword of the Moslems and will appear before my Lord like the tree which brought forth no fruit, like the servant who hid his master's talent in the ground. This is why I weep and lament. Like natural fathers who grieve over the fact that, though they are married, yet have they no children, so do I grieve and lament that I have not a single spiritual son who might inherit the riches of my wisdom."

Hearing such words, the father of the holy John rejoiced that he had finally found the treasure which he had sought for so long; and he said to the elder: "Be not dismayed, father; God can grant the desire of thy heart!" And having said this, he went quickly to the Caliph of the Saracens and, falling at his feet, earnestly besought him to give him the captive monk. And he was not refused: the Caliph presented the prisoner to him as a gift, which was, in actual fact, a gift more precious than many other gifts. With joy the father of John brought the blessed Cosmas to his home and consoled him after his



long suffering, giving comfort and rest.

"Father," he said, "be thou the master of my house and share in all my joys and sorrows!" And he added: "Behold, God hath not only given thee freedom, but hath fulfilled thy desire! I have these two children in the flesh — John, and another child whom I have adopted as my son, an orphan from birth, who was born in Jerusalem. He beareth the same name as thou, for they also call him Cosmas. I entreat thee, father: teach them wisdom and good morals, and instruct them in every good work; make them thy spiritual sons, give them new birth and raise them in doctrine, and leave them heirs after thee to that spiritual wealth which no one can steal."

The blessed elder Cosmas rejoiced, glorified God, and began diligently to instruct and teach both children. And the boys were intelligent, absorbed everything their teacher taught them, and progressed rapidly in knowledge. John, like an eagle flying through the air, attained unto the lofty mysteries of teaching, and his spiritual brother, Cosmas, like a ship borne along speedily by a fair wind, soon attained unto the depths of wisdom. Studying diligently and assiduously, they acquired skill in wisdom in but a short time: they mastered grammar, philosophy and arithmetic, and became like unto Pythagoras and Diophanes. They also studied geometry, so that one might almost have credited them with being new Euclids. The degree to which they perfected their skill in poetry is borne witness by the ecclesiastical hymns and verses they composed. They did not omit to study astronomy, and likewise learned well the mysteries of theology. Moreover, they learned good morals and a virtuous life, and became fully perfect in knowledge of spiritual and worldly wisdom. John in particular excelled. He amazed his own teacher, whom he surpassed in certain areas of knowledge. And John was a great theologian, a fact attested to by his divinely inspired and wise books. Yet he was not vain about his knowledge. As with a fruit-laden tree, the more it puts forth fruit, the lower its branches bend down towards the ground, so it was with John: the more he excelled in wisdom, the less he thought of himself. He was able to crush within himself the vain dreams and passionate thoughts of youth, and lit his soul with the fire of divine desire, like a lamp full of oil.

One day, Cosmas the teacher said to John's father: "Thy desire hath been fulfilled, lord: thy children have learned well, so that they have already surpassed me in wisdom; for such students it is not enough to be equal to their teacher. Thanks to a good memory and unceasing labors, they have attained all the depth of wisdom to perfection; and God hath increased their gift. I need teach them nothing further; they themselves are capable of teaching others. Wherefore, I beseech thee, lord, to grant me leave to enter a monastery, where I myself will be a disciple and learn higher wisdom from perfect monks. That worldly philosophy which I have mastered leadeth me on to spiritual philosophy, which is of higher dignity and greater purity than worldly philosophy, for it bringeth merit and saveth the soul."

Hearing this, the father of John was grieved and was loath to part with such a worthy and wise instructor. Yet he did not dare hold back the elder, lest he grieve him. He granted his desire and, having rewarded him handsomely, dismissed him in peace. That monk then departed to the Lavra of the venerable Sabbas, and, living there profitably until his repose, departed to God, the most perfect Wisdom.

Several years later, the father of John also reposed. The Caliph of the Saracens, summoning John, proposed that he become his prime minister. John declined, having another desire: to labor for God in solitude. Yet he was compelled to submit and accept that position of leadership against his will, and received even greater authority in the city of Damascus than his father had enjoyed.

At that time, there reigned in the Byzantine Empire Leo the Isaurian, who rose up against the Church of God like a wild beast, like a roaring lion. Casting the icons out of the holy churches, he committed them to the flames, and mercilessly mutilated with cruel tortures those who believed in an Orthodox manner and venerated the holy icons. Hearing of this, John was kindled with zeal for piety, emulating Elijah the Tishbite and his own namesake, the Forerunner of the Lord. Taking up the sword of the Word of God, he began to cut off therewith, as though it were a head, the heretical reasoning of the impious Emperor. He sent out many letters concerning the veneration of the holy icons to those Orthodox people he knew. In these epistles, on the basis of the sacred Scriptures and the ancient Tradition of the God-bearing fathers, he wisely showed how it is necessary to render due honor to the holy icons. Those to whom he wrote, John asked to show his letters to other brethren who shared their faith, to confirm them in Orthodoxy. Thus the saint hastened to fill the whole world with his divinely inspired epistles. Disseminated all throughout the Byzantine Empire, they made the Orthodox steadfast in piety, and wounded the heretics like goads. Word of this reached the Emperor Leo himself, who, unable to bear any denunciation of his ungodliness, summoned heretics who shared his beliefs and gave them definite orders: they were to assume a false appearance of piety and search among the Orthodox for some letter of John written in his own hand, and ask to read it, as though for their own benefit. After much effort, those who took part in this nefarious plot found somewhere among the faithful a letter written by John in his own handwriting, and, having obtained it under false pretences, they placed it in the hands of the Emperor. The Emperor entrusted it to skilled scribes, that they, having examined John's letter, might forge a letter from the saint to the Emperor, to all appearances in John's own handwriting and sent from Damascus. This forged letter read as follows: "Hail, O Emperor! I rejoice in thy dominion, in the name of our common Faith, and render homage and fitting honor to thine Imperial Majesty. I inform thee that our city of Damascus, which is in the hands of the Saracens, is poorly defended and boasts no strong guard; the force stationed there is weak and small. I entreat thee: be merciful to this city, for the sake of God, and send hither thy brave army. If it is made to appear that it intends to go elsewhere, it can fall upon Damascus unawares, and then thou wilt be able to take the city under thy rule without difficulty. In this I will do much to assist thee, for the city and the entire country are in my hands."

Having forged for himself this letter, allegedly from John, the devious Emperor ordered a letter composed from himself to the Saracen Caliph Hisham, which read: "There is nought better, I think, than to have peace and to enjoy amicable relations, for to keep vows of peace is highly praiseworthy and pleasing to God. Therefore, the peace I have concluded with thee I desire to keep honorably and faithfully to the end. However, a certain Christian who liveth in thy domain urgeth me with his frequent letters to violate the peace and promiseth to surrender the city of Damascus into my hands without difficulty if I come against it with mine army. I send thee one of these letters which this Christian hath

written. It should convince thee of my friendship; and thou shalt be able to see treachery and enmity in the one who dared write thus to me, and wilt know how to punish him."

These two letters the impious Emperor Leo sent with his own plenipotentiary to the Saracen Caliph in Damascus. On receiving and reading them both, the Caliph summoned John and showed him the forged letter which it was alleged that he had written to the Emperor Leo. Reading and glancing through the letter, John said: "The letters on this scroll are somewhat similar to my handwriting, yet my hand did not write this, for it hath never entered my mind to write to the Emperor of the Greeks. It is impossible that I would deal falsely with my master!"

John understood that this was a work of malicious, evil, heretical cunning. But the Caliph, roused to rage, commanded that the right hand of the innocent John be cut off. John earnestly besought the Caliph to wait and give him a little time to establish his innocence and explain the hatred in which the wicked heretical Emperor Leo held him, but his request was refused. The wrathful Caliph ordered the punishment executed immediately. They severed the right hand of John: that hand which had strengthened the Orthodox for God; that hand, which with its letters had denounced those who hate the Lord was, instead of the ink wherewith it had written concerning the veneration icons, stained with its own blood. After the punishment had been inflicted, John's hand was exposed in the market-place, in the midst of the city, and John himself, swooning from the pain and loss of blood, was led away to his home. When evening fell, learning that the wrath of the Caliph had already abated, the blessed one sent him a request: "Mine affliction increaseth and causeth me indescribable torment; I am unable to find solace while my severed hand is hanging, suspended aloft. I entreat thee, my lord: give the order for my hand to be given back to me, that I may bury it in the ground, for I am certain that if it will be buried, I shall receive relief in my pain."

The tyrant acceded to this request and ordered the hand removed from the public place and given to John. Taking up his severed hand, John entered his prayer-room and, falling down before the holy icon of the all-pure Theotokos, who was depicted with the divine infant in her arms, he placed the severed hand against his wrist and began to pray with weeping and sighing which issued from the depths of his heart: "O Mistress, all-pure Mother who gavest birth to my God! Behold my right hand which hath been cut off for the sake of the divine icons! Thou knowest what hath moved Leo to wrath. Haste thou to mine aid, and heal my hand. The right hand of the Most High Who was incarnate of thee worketh many miracles for the sake of thy supplications; wherefore, I beseech Him to heal my right hand through thy mediation. O Mother of God, let this my right hand write what thou thyself shalt permit in praise of thee and thy Son, that it may help the Orthodox Faith with its writings! Thou art able to accomplish all things, if thou wishest, for thou art the Mother of God!"

Speaking thus with tears, John fell asleep and beheld in a dream the all-pure Mother of God gazing upon him from the icon with luminous and compassionate eyes; and she said: "Thy hand is now whole. Be not dismayed over what hath passed, but labor diligently therewith, as thou hast promised me. Make

it the pen of a scribe."

On awakening, John felt his right hand and perceived that it had been healed. He rejoiced in spirit in God his Savior and His all-immaculate Mother, that the Almighty had worked such a miracle for him. And rising and lifting his hands up to heaven, he sent up thanksgiving to God and the Mother of God. And he rejoiced all that night with all his household, chanting a new hymn: "Thy right hand, O Lord, is glorified in strength" [Ex 15:6]; Thy right hand hath healed my severed right hand and crushed the enemies who do not venerate the precious image of Thee and Thine all-pure Mother; and thereby it will destroy the enemies who destroy the icons, for the magnification of Thy glory!"

While John was thus rejoicing with his household and chanting hymns of thanksgiving, his neighbors heard this and, learning the reason for his joy and gladness, marvelled exceedingly. Soon the Caliph of the Saracens also learned of this and, summoning John immediately, ordered him to show him his severed hand. Around the joint from which the hand had been severed there was a mark like a red thread, which remained, by the permission of the Mother of God, to serve as mute testimony to the fact that the hand had indeed been cut off. Seeing this, the Caliph asked: "What physician and what treatment hath joined thy hand to thy wrist so well, and healed it so soon, and quickened it, so that it is as though it had never been cut off and deadened?" And John did not conceal the miracle, but said for all to hear: "My lord, the Almighty Physician, hearkening unto mine earnest supplication through His all-pure Mother, hath healed my wound by His omnipotent power and hath made healthy that hand which thou didst order cut off!" Then the Caliph exclaimed: "Woe is me! I have failed to perceive the calumny and have unjustly condemned and punished thee, an innocent and good man! I ask thee to forgive me for having sentenced thee so precipitously and foolishly. Receive back thy former rank and honor, and be thou our prime minister. Henceforth, without thee and thy counsel nothing will be done in our realm!"

But John, falling at the feet of the Caliph, besought him to release him from his service and not to hinder him from following his Lord with the monks who denied themselves and took up the yoke of the Lord. The Caliph was loath to let him go and attempted to persuade John to remain the chief of his household and overseer of his entire realm. And there was a long dispute between them: one would beg the other, the other would try to overcome him with a request. With difficulty John attained what he wanted, although not immediately; yet nevertheless he prevailed over the Caliph and was given the freedom to do as he pleased.

On returning to his home, John straightway distributed his possessions among the poor, emancipated his slaves, and set out for Jerusalem with his fellow student, Cosmas. There, having worshipped at the holy places, he arrived at the Lavra of the venerable Sabbas and implored the abbot to accept him as a lost sheep and admit him to his chosen flock. The abbot and all the brethren recognized John, for he was already famous and everybody knew him, thanks to his authority, honors and great wisdom. And the abbot rejoiced that such a man had come humbly and in poverty and desired to become a monk. Receiving him with love, the abbot summoned one of the brethren who was more experienced and



labored in ascetic struggles, desiring to place John under his care, that he might teach him spiritual philosophy and monastic discipline. But that monk refused, in no way desiring to be the teacher of such a man who, in his learning, surpassed many. The abbot then called another monk, but that one, too, declined the suggestion; likewise, a third, a fourth, and all the rest refused, each of them being aware that he was unworthy to be the instructor of such a wise man; moreover, all were daunted by John's exalted station.

When all had refused, a certain simple yet experienced elder was summoned; and he did not decline to be John's instructor. Receiving John into his cell and desiring to set in him a foundation for a virtuous life, the elder first of all imposed upon him the following rules: never to do anything according to his own will; to offer to God his labors and earnest supplications as a sacrifice; to shed tears if he wished to wash away the sins of his past life, for in God's sight such are more precious than drops of any costly incense. These rules were the basis for such works as are perfected by bodily labors. For that which is becoming to the soul, the elder set the following rules: that John not harbor in his mind anything earthly; not only not to introduce into his imagination any unseemly images, but to keep his mind pure and untouched by any vain predilection and empty pride; that he boast not of his wisdom and the fact that he was educated, nor that he was able to attain everything in perfection utterly; that he not seek after any revelations and understandings of hidden mysteries; that he not expect his reason to remain unshaken unto the end of his life and that he would not sin or fall into error; on the contrary, he should be aware that his thoughts were feeble and his reason could sin, and therefore he should try not to allow his thoughts to wander, and should take care to concentrate them, that his mind might thus be enlightened by God, his soul illumined and his body cleansed of all defilement; his body and soul should be united with his mind and be three, in the image of the Holy Trinity: he should become a man neither fleshly, nor psychic, but spiritual in all things, by his good volition turning from a man of two parts — body and soul — to a third, more important part — the mind. Such were the rules which the spiritual father imposed upon his spiritual son, the teacher upon his pupil, adding also the following words: "Thou must not only refrain from writing letters to anyone, but must not even speak of anything from the secular sciences. Keep silence with prudence; for thou knowest that our philosophers teach silence, and Pythagoras had his disciples keep a long silence; and think not that it is a good thing to speak out of season. Pay heed to David, who said: 'I held my peace, even from good' [Ps 38:3]. What benefit did he receive from this? Listen: 'My heart grew hot within me' [v. 4], that is, with the fire of divine love which was kindled within the Prophet by contemplation of God."

All of these instructions of the elder fell upon the heart of John like seed upon good soil, and, putting out shoots, took root; for John, living long under that divinely inspired elder, assiduously carried out all his instructions and listened to his orders, obeying him without pretence, without contradiction or murmuring; and even in his thoughts he never opposed the commands of his elder. This is what he inscribed upon his heart, as on tablets of stone: "Every command of one's father, according to the teaching of the Apostle, must be fulfilled 'without wrath and doubting' [I Tim 2:8]." Yea, and what profit would there be for one under obedience, to have affairs in his own hands, but grumbling on his lips, to fulfil an order, but to contradict it with his tongue and mind, even when such a man is perfect?

Never. In vain do such people labor and think that they are living virtuously; in uniting obedience, they introduce a serpent into the depths of their souls.

And the blessed John, as one truly obedient, never grumbled amid the tasks he was assigned to perform.

One day, the elder, wishing to test the obedience and humility of John, gathered a great many baskets, the weaving of which was their occupation; and he said to John: "I have heard, child, that in Damascus baskets are sold for more money than in Palestine. In our cells we lack much that is essential, as thou thyself canst see; wherefore, take these baskets, go quickly to Damascus, and sell them there. But see that thou dost not sell them for less than the appointed price." And the elder set for the baskets a price far in excess of their worth. But John, truly obedient, did not protest in word or thought, nor did he say that the baskets were priced beyond the cost of others; he did not even consider it a waste of time and effort for him to go to a city where everyone would know him and where in the past he had been well known to everyone because of his former authority. He said nothing of the sort, nor thought such, showing himself to be an emulator of Christ the Master, Who was obedient even unto death. Saying, "Give me thy blessing, father," and taking the spiritual father's blessing, John immediately took the baskets upon his shoulders and hastened to Damascus. Clad in tattered clothing, John walked about the city and offered his baskets for sale in the market-places. Those who wished to purchase baskets asked how much they cost, but learning their high price, they mocked and laughed, insulted and reviled John. The blessed one's acquaintances did not recognize him, because he who once had worn gold-embroidered raiment was now clad in the ragged clothing of the poor, his face altered because of his fasting, his cheeks sunken in and his comeliness faded away. But a certain citizen, who had once been John's servant, fixing his gaze attentively upon his countenance, recognized the saint and marvelled at his pauper's aspect. Taking pity and sighing from the depths of his heart, he approached John as though the latter were a stranger to him; and he gave him in payment the full appointed price for all his baskets — not because he was in need of baskets, but out of compassion for such a man, who, having once enjoyed such fame and wealth, had since come to such poverty and low estate for God's sake. Taking payment for the baskets, John then returned to his elder, like a victor from battle, having cast down to the ground the enemy of man, the devil, by obedience and humility, and with him pride and vainglory.

Some time passed, and one of the monks of the Lavra reposed. His brother, left alone after his death, grieved inconsolably for him. Greatly and long did John try to comfort him, but he was unable to bring any consolation to the bitterly grieving brother. The latter besought John with tears to compose some compunctionate burial hymns for him, for his consolation and the solace of his grief. John declined, fearing to violate the command of his elder, who had ordered him to do nothing without his permission. But the mourning brother did not cease begging John, saying: "Wherefore wilt thou not have pity on my sorrowful soul and give me if only a little medicine for my greatly grieving heart? If thou wert a physician of the body and some bodily infirmity had stricken me down, and I were to ask thee to treat me, wouldst thou really, having the ability to treat me, reject me, and would I then have to die of my disease? Wouldst thou not have to give an answer to God on mine account, because thou wast able

to help, yet refused to do so? And now I am suffering even more from pain of my heart and am seeking only a little help from thee, and thou spurnest me! If I die of grief, wilt thou not have to answer to God all the more for my sake? If thou fearest the injunction of thine elder, I will so hide what thou hast written that thine elder will neither learn nor hear of it."

Finally, John yielded to such persuasion and wrote the following funeral troparia. "What sweetness of life . . .", "All human vanity . . .", "O men, why do ye trouble yourselves.. .", and others, which even to this day are chanted at funeral services in church.

One day, when the elder had left the cell to go somewhere, John, sitting therein, chanted the troparia he had composed. But sooner than expected, the elder returned, and, as he drew near to his cell, heard John chanting. Straightway, he entered the cell and addressed his disciple wrathfully saying: "Hast thou so soon forgotten thine own promises as to rejoice and make merry, chanting such songs to thyself instead of weeping?" John related the reason of his chanting and, explaining that he was compelled by the tears of a brother to write the hymns, entreated the elder's forgiveness, falling on his face in the dust. But the elder, implacable as a stone immediately withdrew his permission from the blessed one to reside with him and drove him from the cell.

Expelled, John recalled the expulsion of Adam from paradise which was caused by disobedience, and he wept bitterly before his elder's cell, as Adam once did before paradise. Afterwards, he went to other fathers whom he knew to be perfect in the virtues and besought them to approach his elder and ask him to forgive him his offense. They went and entreated the elder to forgive his disciple and receive him back into his cell, but the elder turned a deaf ear to their pleas. One of the fathers said to him "Impose a penance upon the sinner, but deprive him not of thy permission to reside with thee." Then the elder said "Behold the penance which I will impose upon him if he desireth to receive forgiveness for his disobedience: let him wash with his own hands all the chamber-pots in the cells and clean out all the latrines in the Lavra." The fathers were embarrassed by such words and departed in consternation, amazed by the cruel and unyielding demeanor of the elder. Meeting them and bowing down before them as was the custom, John asked what his father had said to them. Recounting the cruelty of the elder, they did not dare relate what the elder had set as a penance, for they were ashamed to communicate the elder's command. But John persistently pleaded with them to tell him what his father had appointed for him, and, when he found out, he rejoiced beyond all expectation, willingly taking up the task set for him, although it aroused shame. Having prepared the vessels and implements for cleaning immediately, he carried out the command assiduously touching the excrement with the very hand which he formerly anointed with various fragrant ointments, and defiling with impurities the right hand which had been miraculously healed by the all-pure Theotokos. O, the profound humility of that wonderful man and true monk! The elder was then moved to compassion, seeing John's humility, and, approaching him, embraced him and kissed his head, shoulders and hands, saying, "O, what an athlete for Christ have I trained! Behold, a true son of blessed obedience!" But John, embarrassed by the elder's words, fell on his face before him, as before God, and, not exalted by the praises of his father, but humbled all the more, begged him to forgive him his transgression. Taking John by the hand, the

elder led him into his cell. John was so elated by this that it was as though he had been given leave to return to paradise, and he lived with the elder in their former accord.

When some time passed, the Mistress of the world, the all-pure and all-blessed Virgin appeared in a dream to the elder and said: "Wherefore dost thou set up a spring which can pour forth sweet and abundant water, a water which is better than that which flowed from the rock in the wilderness (Num. 20:11), the water which David desired to drink (II Kgs. 3:15), the water which Christ promised the Samaritan woman? Do not hinder the flow of this spring: it will flow abundantly and will inundate and irrigate the whole world: it will drown the sea of heresies and transform them into wondrous sweetness. Let the thirsty come to this water, and let those who have not the silver of a pure life sell their passions and by emulating the virtues of John let them acquire therefrom purity in the dogmas and in deeds. He shall take up the psalters of the prophets, the harp of David: he shall now sing to the Lord God and surpass Moses and the hymnody of Miriam. Compared with his hymns, the useless songs of Orpheus, which are described in myths, will be as naught: he will sing a spiritual and heavenly song and will emulate the hymnody of the cherubim. All the churches of Jerusalem will be made like maidens playing upon the tympanum, chanting to the Lord, proclaiming the death and the resurrection of Christ; he will write down the dogmas of the Orthodox Faith and denounce the false doctrines of the heretics; 'his heart shall pour forth a good word; and he shall speak of the most wondrous works of the King' [cf. Ps 44:2]."

In the morning, the elder, summoning John, said to him: "O child of the obedience of Christ, open thy lips and draw in breath, and what thou hast received in thy heart, say with thy lips, let them speak of the wisdom which thou hast learned through meditating on God. Open thy mouth, not for the telling of tales, but for words of truth, not for indistinct images, but for dogmas. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, which contemplateth God: that is, to the Church of peace; speak not empty words loosed upon the air, but those which the Holy Spirit hath inscribed upon thine heart. Ascend thou the lofty Sinai of the vision of God and the revelation of the divine mysteries, and in thy great humility, by way of which thou hast descended into the uttermost abyss, mount now the mountain of the Church and proclaim, preaching the Gospel to Jerusalem. Lift up thy voice mightily, for the Mother of God hath told me many glorious things of thee. And do thou forgive me for hindering thee in my rudeness and ignorance."

Thenceforth, the blessed John began to write divine books and to set down melodious hymns. He composed the Octoechos, which, like a spiritual flute, delights the Church of God to this day. John began his first book with these words: "Thy victorious right hand hath in godly manner been glorified in might..."

To commemorate the miraculous healing of his right hand, in an ecstasy of joy he cried aloud to the Theotokos: "In thee all creation rejoiceth, O thou who art full of grace..."

The bandage which John had used to wrap his severed hand, he wore on his head in memory of that





# THE 1946 COUNCIL OF BISHOPS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ABROAD

by G. Seide, Ph.D.

## PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Forty years ago, on 12 April/6 May 1946, the feast of the holy Great martyr George the Victorious, the first Council of Bishops of the Church Abroad after World War II was convoked. The Council was attended by fifteen hierarchs in person, while eleven others associated themselves with the decisions of the Council by submitting written opinions. Represented at the Council were bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad as well as bishops of the Byelorussian and Ukrainian Autonomous Churches who had fled from the Soviet Union and joined the Church Abroad in the emigration. These were from the Byelorussian Autonomous Church: Metropolitan Panteleimon of Minsk & All Byelorussia, Archbishop Benedict of Grodno & Byelostock, Archbishop Philotheus of Mogilev & Mstislavl', Bishop Athanasius of Vitebsk and Polotsk, Bishop Stephen of Smolensk & Orshansk, Bishop Gregory of Gomel & Mozersk, and Bishop Theodore of Brest & Polessa, and from the Ukrainian Autonomous Church, Archbishop Panteleimon of Kiev & Cauch, Bishop Leontius of Zhatomir & Volyn', Bishop Eulogius of Vinnitsa, Bishop Demetrius of Ekaterinoslav', and Bishop Paul of Bryansk.

## I. A SURVEY OF THE HISTORY OF THE EVENTS OF 1944-1945

The conclusion of World War II was a crucial turning-point in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. As a result of the communists' seizure of power in the lands of eastern and south-eastern Europe, and in China and Manchuria, the Church lost all of its parishes, churches, monasteries, schools and charitable institutions in those territories. In Manchuria and China alone there were about a hundred churches and chapels, a theological institute, a seminary, several monasteries which had their own printing presses, old-age homes, orphanages, schools and other institutions. Approximately two hundred thousand believers belonging to the Church Abroad lived in this territory.

In eastern Europe, the Church lost the Milkovo Monastery and the Lesna Convent of the Mother of God, in Yugoslavia; the Monastery of St. Alexander Nevsky with its theological school, and the Convent of the Protection of the Mother of God in Bulgaria, and the Monastery of St. Job of Pochaev with its printing establishment in Czechoslovakia.

To these losses within the boundaries of territories taken over by the communist regime the following may also be added: in consequence of the decision of Parliament the Church's properties in the State

of Israel were handed over to the Moscow Patriarchate by the Israeli authorities. Among these were the Gorny Convent, a considerable number of buildings in the Russian compound in Jerusalem, as well as numerous churches, chapels and parcels of land.

At the Cleveland Sobor, the approximately three hundred parishes of the North American Metropolitan District (the Metropolia) withdrew from the Church Abroad, including its monasteries, seminaries and charitable institutions.

The Church's administration and the Synod of Bishops were evacuated from Belgrade in September of 1944 when the Soviet forces were approaching the city. They finally arrived in Munich, by way of Vienna and Carlsbad, and that city became the new ecclesiastical center of the Church Abroad. In the post-war years, there were, in Munich itself and its environs, fourteen churches, a monastery dedicated to St. Job of Pochaev, several secondary and elementary schools, a printing establishment, and cultural and charitable institutions. Munich was the place of residence of the Synod of Bishops and the Head of the Church.

In summer of 1945, the only members of the Synod of Bishops were Metropolitan Anastasius, Metropolitan Seraphim (Lade) from 1942), and Protopresbyter George Grabbe (Count Grabbe, head of the Synod's chancery from 1931, at present Bishop Gregory, Archbishops Germanus (Maximov), Tikhon (Lyashchenko) and Theophanes (Gavrilov), who had been members of the Synod, all died between 1943 and 1945. Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev) remained in Bulgaria, and Metropolitan Seraphim (Lukianov) defected to the Moscow Patriarchate. It seemed as though the end of the Church Abroad, perhaps the end of the Russian ecclesiastical emigration in general, was drawing nigh. Metropolitan Eulogius (Georgievsky), with the bishops, priests and parishes of the Paris Jurisdiction, also joined the Moscow Patriarchate. In his three-volume *History of the Russian Church*, John Chrysostom (who is certainly no well-wisher of the Church Abroad) writes of this (Vol. III, p. 164): "Metropolitan Eulogius seriously believed that the old Orthodox Russia had been reborn: he literally went into raptures over Soviet marshals and generals. Later, he even submitted a request for a Soviet passport and received it. He demonstrated himself an extreme Sovietophile in all things. Metropolitan Nicholas found in him a reliable ally, not to say a willing instrument for the implementation of the plans of the Moscow Patriarchate." The Paris group moved so quickly to join with Moscow that, in the summer of 1945, it was in two jurisdictions simultaneously: it had not yet left the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate when it united with Moscow.

A similar coup was brought off by Stalin and the Soviet Union in that part of the Russian emigration which was in North America, the ecclesiastical administration of one portion of which met the Moscow Patriarchate half-way in the sense that it entered into negotiations with it, beginning in 1944, to consider the possibility of uniting the North American parishes with Moscow. Bishops Alexis (Panteleev) of Sitka & Alaska and Macarius (Lyinsky) of Brooklyn were dispatched to Moscow for the talks, and early in 1946, they defected to the Moscow Patriarchate, in the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, the Church Abroad unexpectedly recovered from these blows. This was primarily due

to three facts: 1) the immediate and energetic leadership of Metropolitan Anastasius during the difficult months following the end of the War; 2) the love and selfless adherence of the Church Abroad—bishops, priests, monastic and secular clergy—as well as; and 3) the mass of new emigrants who escaped from the Soviet Union in 1944-1945 and who lived in Germany as free foreign laborers and later as D.P.s (Displaced Persons). The memory of the horror of Stalin's Purge and the complete subservience of the Moscow Patriarchate to the Soviet regime were fresh in the memories of these millions of emigrants. After the war, they did not want to share the Sovietophile ecstasies of the old Russian emigré bishops and priests. Thus these new emigrants—bishops, clergymen and faithful—unhappily were not Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. Even the enemies of the Church were compelled to acknowledge these facts. N. C. Stave says of this in *Christians in the U.S.S.R.*, Mainz, 1965, p. 5: "If the Church Abroad exerted a significant magnetic force upon the new emigration—which was composed of several hundred thousand emigrés—and D. Pospielovsky, whose story of the Church is famous for its transience towards the Church Abroad, wrote that the Church Abroad 'achieved a reunification of bishops and clergy in Germany' (p. 294f). The 'directly pro-Soviet attitudes [of the Metropolia] led to the establishment of Synodal churches in America and Canada by the new refugees from Germany' (p. 271). It had, thus, however, passed over in silence the fact that the pro-Soviet position of the bishops in North America and France caused confusion and unrest among the ranks of the diaspora and the parishes of those emigrations, resulting in the separation of many parishes, from which the Moscow Patriarchate gained the most, from the Paris Jurisdiction in western Europe and northern Africa, approximately twenty parishes dissociated themselves and joined the Moscow Patriarchate, and in North America, the Patriarchate was in control of more than fifty parishes by 1947 (Pospielovsky, p. 295). The Paris Jurisdiction and the Metropolia realized too late that unification with the Moscow Patriarchate was impossible. Paris severed its relations with Moscow once again, as it had once before, in 1931, and the Metropolia terminated its negotiations in 1946.

In 1945, the well-defined position of Metropolitan Anastasius with regard to the Moscow Patriarchate was diametrically opposed to the sovietophile positions of the bishops of the Paris Jurisdiction, as well as to the position of a certain element in the episcopate in North America. John Chrysostom writes of this as follows: "But despite all such difficulties, the Munich Synod did not for a moment entertain any thought of submission to Moscow. Metropolitan Anastasius addressed an Epistle to his flock in which he forthrightly rejected the Patriarchate's proposal which would have entailed the submission of the Church Abroad; and set forth in detail the reasons why such submission to the Moscow Patriarchate was unacceptable to the Church Abroad under the present circumstances. This Epistle is a document full of clarity and determination. One must also not forget that it was written at a time when any harsh criticism of Bolshevism and the Soviet system was readily viewed as 'fascism.' The bishops at Munich were, in all likelihood, seriously threatened by the Soviet commissars, who were, at that time, forcibly 'repatriating' Russian emigrants in western Germany, often with the use of brute force. It was at just this time that the terrible tragedies in Lienz, Plattling, and several other places, were played out, when thousands of Russian prisoners of war were, against their will, handed over to the Soviet forces, and many of them, seeing no escape, chose to commit suicide. These dreadful scenes were still fresh in the memory of many. Every harsh statement against communism could be

interpreted as 'fascist propaganda' and could be cause for arrest, and in several cases for the extradition of some emigrant to the Soviet Union as well. For this reason, Metropolitan Anastasius's Pastoral Epistle to the faithful deserves particular attention. In it he insistently emphasizes that the Russian Church Abroad has never severed its canonical, prayerful and spiritual unity with its Mother Church" (Chrysostom, op. cit. Vol III, pp 146-147).

The basic positions of this Epistle state " The division between Metropolitan Sergius and the administrative organ of the Church Abroad began from that point when he, consciously and out of conviction, entered into a concord with the godless regime, expressing his new relationship to it in his well-known declaration of 29 May 1927. Everyone understands what turmoil this act caused in the soul of the faithful Russian people, both in Russia itself and in the diaspora. The bishops abroad could not accept the views expressed in it, because they [i.e. Metropolitan Sergius' views] are manifestly opposed to the spirit of the teaching of the Gospel, the apostles and the fathers of the Church, and are profoundly at variance with the ordinances of our Mother Church. Our posterity will be ashamed when they compare the language of the present primates [i.e., the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate] in their address to those who rule with what the ancient Christians said to the Roman emperors. If many of the bishops of the diaspora, and with them a great number of the clergy and faithful laymen, remain aloof from any canonical ties with the present ecclesiastical authorities in Russia, they are not compelled to this by 'pride' — the mother of all heresies and schisms — but by the voice of their ecclesiastical awareness and their Orthodox conscience, which demands obedience to God rather than to man (Acts 4: 19). Each of us knows that it is easier to walk by the wide road, the so-called path of least resistance, than to walk the narrow way. The only completely competent judge between the Church Abroad and the present head of the Church of Russia can be a freely and legally convoked council of the entire Church of Russia, totally independent in its decisions, with the participation of as many as possible of the bishops abroad and especially of those presently imprisoned in Russia. Before such a council we are prepared to render account for each moment and all our actions during our sojourn abroad" — citations from the Epistle taken from *Anthology of the Selected Writings of His Eminence Metropolitan Anastasius, First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad* (Jordanville, N.Y. 1948) pp 216-225)

The result of this Pastoral Epistle was a campaign of slander against Metropolitan Anastasius and the Church Abroad, not only in the communist press, but also on the part of opponents of the Russian Church Abroad, who, while situated in the free world, expressed their solidarity with Moscow by attempting to accuse the Synod Abroad of collaboration with Hitler's regime.

In 1946, Metropolitan Theophanes, Head of the Russian parishes in North America, sent a telegram to the president of Switzerland in which he condemned Metropolitan Anastasius against the accusations emanating from proponents of the Moscow line and wrote: "Please accept my testimony in defense

Metropolitan Anastasius, who is a prisoner of conscience in Geneva, and who, as Head of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad is doing everything possible to help the Russian émigrés and prisoners of war in Europe. Metropolitan Anastasius is a persecuted and persecuted outside of Russia in the best possible manner, and is a man of the highest moral and spiritual integrity, who does not meddle in politics.

The current campaign waged against him by the communist press is extremely lamentable and undesirable, and should be ignored. For this reason I most respectfully request that Your Excellency permit him to remain in Switzerland for the good of the Church of Russia and the [Russian] people in Europe.

Respectfully  
Theoph.

Metropolitan & Archbishop of North America & Canada  
(*The Russian Orthodox Church in North America*, [Jordanville, N.Y.: 1954, p. 114])

Yet one ought to attach even greater importance to the statement of Patriarch Gabriel of the Serbian Orthodox Church, who had been arrested by the Germans and was ultimately imprisoned by them in the Dachau concentration camp. After his release, he travelled to London for the christening of Prince Charles, the heir to the throne. When he heard accusations made by pro-Communists that Metropolitan Anastasius had collaborated with the Germans, Patriarch Gabriel made a public statement, declaring that "Metropolitan Anastasius conducted himself with great wisdom and tact, under the Nazis, was ever loyal to the Serbs, had several times been subjected to searches by them, and was not trusted by the Germans." This authoritative statement, by Patriarch Gabriel, who had suffered under the Nazis, effectively counters the malicious slander with which the enemies of our Russian Church Abroad, falsely accusing Vadyka Anastasius of collaboration with the Germans, tried to besmirch him (*Archpastoral Epistles, Sermons and Speeches of His Eminence Metropolitan Anastasius: A Jubilee Anthology 1906-1956*, Jordanville, N.Y.: 1956, pp. 19-20).

The statement of Patriarch Gabriel was published in two American periodicals: the magazine *The Russian-American Church Messenger*, (#3, 1946), and the newspaper *Rossia*, 8 November 1945 issue. Later Professor S. V. Troitsky tried to dismiss these words of the Patriarch of Serbia as a fabrication of the Russian emigré press, writing in his book *On the Falseness of the Karlovitsky Schism* (Paris, 1960), pp. 116-117: "He had only just died, and already they were ascribing to him such convenient words." But then the question arises as to why the Patriarch was not questioned about this after the publication in 1945-46, the more so that he only repeated in 1950. Here, doubts can arise only with respect to the slanderous insinuations of Troitsky. Furthermore, the fact that the Serbian Orthodox Church has continued in prayerful communion with the Church Abroad up to the present time, and that bishops of both Churches continue to celebrate the divine services, despite pressure from the Moscow Patriarchate to compel the Church of Serbia to break off relations with the Church Abroad, tells against Troitsky.

## II. THE RESTORATION OF CHURCH LIFE BEGINNING IN 1945

During World War II, contact between the Synod of Bishops and its dioceses outside the area of Nazi control, primarily with America and the Far East, was interrupted. The restoration of a viable



ecclesiastical administration in the summer of 1945 was, therefore, the most important of Metropolitan Anastasius's objectives

The membership of the Synod of Bishops, the highest organ of the Church Abroad's administration, consisted solely of Metropolitan Anastasius, Metropolitan Seraphim (Lade), and Protopresbyter George Grabbe (Count Grabbe, now Bishop Gregory). The following bishops were all that were still subject to the Church Abroad in summer of 1945. In Europe—Metropolitans Anastasius and Seraphim (Lade), and Bishops Philip (von Gardner), Alexander (Lovchy, ordained in July of 1945), and Basil (Pavlovsky, d. in October of 1945), in North America—Metropolitan Theophilus (Pashkovsky), Archbishops Vitalis (Maximenko), Tikhon (Troitsky), Leonius (Tarkevich), Alexis (Pentecost), Hieronymus (Chernov), and Bishops Joasaph (Skorodumov), Arsenius (Chagovisev) and Macarius (Ilyinsky, in South America—Archbishop Theodosius (Samoilovich), and in the Far East—Bishop John (Maximovich) of Shanghai. In all, sixteen bishops.

The bishops of the Byelorussian and Ukrainian Autonomous Churches had as yet not submitted themselves to the Church Abroad, it is true, but were collaborating with it closely in ministering to the emigrants in Germany. The competence and authority of the Synod of Bishops had at this time not yet been subjected to doubt by the North American parishes which later seceded to form the Metropolia. This irrefutably proceeds from the following points:

1.) The council of bishops which met in America on 24 May 1945 declared that unification with Moscow was impossible at present, and that relations with the Synod of Bishops would be restored: "The American Metropolitan District has hitherto collaborated with the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church, Abroad on the basis of the Temporary Statutes worked out under the presidency of Patriarch Barnabas of Serbia and accepted by the All America Church Council of 1937, which remains in force to the present time" (*The Russian Orthodox Church in North America*, p. 100). Thus was the former unity, as it existed in 1936-1937, restored.

Bishop Leonius, one of the most dogged proponents of the "special path of American Orthodoxy," unequivocally expressed himself for collaboration with the Munich Synod and against Moscow. He wrote "Would it be ethical to turn our back on these hierarchs, headed by Metropolitan Anastasius, now, when they are all the more in need of our moral and material support? They once helped reconcile a part of our American flock with us, and they should not receive harm from us now. They are now suffering terribly as are all others in Europe. Of course, the All-America Council can adopt another point of view in this matter, but hitherto we have followed the course of collaboration" (Pospisilovsky, op. cit., p. 294).

2.) The appointment, elevation and awarding of bishops can only be done by the Council of bishops, i.e. the Synod of bishops. The decisions of the Synod of Bishops must, however, be confirmed by the next Council of Bishops of the Church Abroad. The chief bishop of a metropolitan district could only award priests with the rank of protopresbyter and abbot. These resolutions were set forth in the "Temporary Statutes of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad" of 1935 (pars. III, IV and VII, 7; see *Church Life* [1935], pp. 11-12, 175-177).

For this reason there were no changes in the composition of the episcopate from the very outset of the War. After the restoration of contacts with the Head of the Church and the the Synod of Bishop Metropolitan Theophilus appeared to the Synod, which decided to make the following changes: to elevate Bishops Leontius and Ioasaph to the rank of archbishops (16 October 1946), to consecrate Archimandrite John (Zionin) as bishop of Sika & Alaska to replace Archbishop Alexis, whose retirement was approved by the Synod. Archbishops Vitalis and Theophan were rewarded for their services with the right to wear the diamond cross in the rank of rank. 14 February/3 March 1946, All of these decisions were accepted by the Synod at the request of Metropolitan Theophilus, clearly demonstrating that the Metropolitan accepted and acknowledged the competence and authority of the Synod of Bishop in Munich over the Church in North America.

As far as possible, contacts were reestablished with other dioceses and ecclesiastical institutions: it was decided to appoint a vicar bishop in Paraguay for the Diocese of Brazil (26 August/8 September 1945) (See the decisions of all the sessions for 1945-46, in *Church Life*, 1947, #1, pp. 3-7 and #2, pp. 1-6).

However, it was extremely difficult to reestablish contacts with the rest of the dioceses while situated in Germany. One ought not to forget that, *even between the zones of occupations controlled by the three Western allies in the summer of 1945, there was still no postal communication!* It was restored only in October of 1945. For communication outside the individual zones of occupation, the permission and approval of the authorities was required. Thus, one begins to understand why Metropolitan Anastasius sought the possibility to make the administrative governance of the Church easier and, therefore, accepted the invitation to relocate in Switzerland. The Swiss government even offered to issue a Swiss passport to him and other clergymen. In September of 1945, Metropolitan Anastasius moved to Switzerland: he did so at a time when the postal communications had not yet been restored in Germany and it was even difficult to foresee when that difficulty would be overcome. Thus, the calumnious assertion of the enemies of the Church Abroad, who to this day maintain that Metropolitan Anastasius "escaped to Switzerland" or "fled to Switzerland", is totally unfounded.

Metropolitan Anastasius remained in Geneva until April of 1946. Prior to his relocation in Switzerland, only three sessions of the Synod of Bishops had been held: from September to March of 1946 there were six sessions. It was resolved, however, that *all decisions made prior to relocation concerned the Diocese of Germany alone*: at the session of 1/14 July 1945, it was decided to set the Austrian parishes apart as an independent diocese, separating them from the Diocese of Germany. The new bishop received the title "of Vienna & Austria". Bishop Basil (Pavlovsky) was assigned to govern the new eparchy. At the following session, which took place on 24 August/6 September 1945, the episcopate of the Ukrainian Autonomous Church was accepted into the Church Abroad, and Archbishop Panteleimon (Rudik), formerly of Kiev, was appointed a member of the Synod.

Only *after relocation in Switzerland* did contacts outside the boundaries of the Diocese of Germany become possible: the contact with North America mentioned above was restored at the first session in Geneva (16/29 October 1945), there followed the restoration of relations with the Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem (13/16 November 1945); the retirement of Abbess Tabitha from her position as

superior of the Gomensky Convent and the appointment of her successor, Sister Galina (Elizabeth Ampenova), as well as the elevation of Hieromonk Basil (Kondratovich) to the rank of archimandrite. Furthermore, Protopresbyter Michae. Pol'sky of the London parish was given an award, since he had not followed his ruling bishop (Metropolitan Seraphim [Lukianov]) into the Moscow Patriarchate. In February of 1946, the rector of the parish in Beirut, Archimandrite Hermogenes, was awarded the right to wear the miter, since he also had refused to submit to Moscow. The widowed Diocese of Western Europe was provided with a new bishop. Archimandrite Nathanael (L'vov) was consecrated bishop of Brussels & Western Europe (decision dated 10/23 February; consecration on 25 February/10 March 1946). On 10/23 February 1946, the episcopate of the Byelorussian Autonomous Church was accepted into the Church Abroad. By a decision of 7/20 March 1946, Bishop Nathanael was appointed a member of the Synod of Bishops, and it was decided to consecrate Archimandrite Seraphim (Ivanov) to be bishop of Santiago & Chile.

Over the course of half a year, the Synod was able to re-establish contacts with a great many parishes and dioceses. This was of tremendous significance, and for this reason, beginning with 1945-46, there began to appear everywhere agents of the Moscow Patriarchate whose objective was to bring the emigrant parishes into subjection to Moscow. And although instances of the submission of parishes of the Church Abroad to the Patriarchal Church continued to be the exception rather than the rule, there was a real danger that they would increase in number as long as contact with the Church Administration and the Synod of Bishops was not restored, since many of the parishes were not even aware that the Synod continued to exist at all. By his move to Switzerland, Metropolitan Anastasius foiled the plans of the Patriarchate and the hope of the opponents of the Church Abroad that it would cease to exist. Thus, the far-seeing decision of Metropolitan Anastasius, to make his residence temporarily in Switzerland, was to a significant degree responsible for the post-War restoration of the Church Abroad.

Also significant is the fact that the Synod of Bishops had acquired new members. By spring of 1946, the following hierarchs constituted the membership of the Synod: Metropolitan Anastasius, as president; Metropolitan Seraphim (Lade) for the Central European Metropolitan District; Archbishop Panteleimon (Raduk) as representative of the Ukrainian clergy and faithful, and Bishop Nathanael (L'vov), representing the Diocese of Western Europe. Archpriest George, Count Grabbe, attended the sessions in the capacity of secretary.

Even in this connection, the enemies of the Church Abroad again and again voice their contention that, after the evacuation, the Synod of Bishops had not been established, since they would have us believe "no bishops" belonged to it any more. Thus, Professor Trousky, in his book *The Falseness of the Karlovsky Schism*, p. 113, to which we have made reference above, maintains that Metropolitan Seraphim no longer belonged to the Synod after 1945, quoting a letter allegedly written by Metropolitan Seraphim in which the "he" writer complains that he was driven from the Synod. The provenance of this letter is extremely dubious; furthermore, Trousky himself only cites the fact that the letter was written on the Metropolitan's stationery (on the original of the letter are the letterhead and seal of Metropolitan Seraphim; no mention is made, however, of any signature. The

Metropolitan's chancery had fallen into the hands of the Soviets when they invaded Berlin, but even if they had not found official stationery, paper and a seal could have been easily fabricated. The fact remains that Metropolitan Seraphim was appointed a member of the Synod of Bishops on 11 June 1942 (*Church Life*, 1942, #7, pp. 7-8), and remained such to the end of his life. After the conclusion of the War he regularly took part in the sessions of the Synod. Thus, mention is made that he delivered a report at the session of 16 August/8 September 1945 (*Church Life*, 1947, #1, p. 4). At its 15 April/4 May 1946 session, the Synod of Bishops retroactively approved all appointments (Synodal Archives, New York Council of 1946, henceforth abbreviated as *C.B. 1946*, ukases #841-843). The fact that Metropolitan Seraphim belonged to the Synod was repeatedly announced in his own periodical, *The Directives & Communications of His Eminence Seraphim, Metropolitan of Berlin & Germany, & of the Central European Metropolitan District* (1946, #4 p. 2).

The number of its members notwithstanding, the authority of the Synod of Bishops, as well as that of the Head of the Church, was, in any event, not subjected to doubt at this time, as we have pointed out in detail above. This was done much later, by certain elements within the American "Metropolia", to mask their own apostasy of 1946 in the guise of legitimacy.

### III THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS OF 1946

The restoration of contacts with the dioceses and parishes in western Europe and overseas—and North America in particular—constituted the prerequisite for the convocation of a Council of Bishops. In the "Temporary Statutes of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia" of 1935, which were, in effect, the objectives and competence of the Council of Bishops (III pars. 1-10) and the Synod of Bishops (IV pars. 1-5 a n) were set forth (*Church Life*, 1935, #11-12, pp. 175-177, and *Seide Geschichte der Russischen Orthodoxen Kirche im Ausland von der Gründung bis in die Gegenwart*, [Wiesbaden 1983], pp. 127-142, 439-441).

Among the duties and responsibilities of the Council of Bishops were "the issuance of epistles on behalf of the entire Russian Orthodox Church outside of Russia" (III 4), "the establishment of episcopal sees, their closure, the alteration of their boundaries outside the borders of the districts" (III 7), and "the awarding of bishops" (III 8). During the intervals between Councils of Bishops, the above-mentioned duties and responsibilities could be exercised temporarily by the one presiding at the Synod of Bishops—i.e., the Head of the Church—and the Synod of Bishops, but had to be confirmed or rejected by the next Council of Bishops.

The last Council of Bishops in which all the bishops of the Church Abroad took part sat immediately after the Pan-Diaspora Council of 1938. After the outbreak of the War, the convocation of the Council of Bishops became impossible, since the majority of the bishops were in areas occupied by the Axis. In 1943, a Council of Bishops sat in which a total of eight bishops from Europe—including two bishops of the Byelorussian Autonomous Church—Archbishop Philotheus (Narko) and Archbishop Benedict (Bobkovsky)—took part. At this Council the election of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) as Patriarch of Moscow was condemned asuncanonical since only eighteen of the approximately one

hundred hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church participated in the balloting. Furthermore, the directives of the Pan-Russia Council of 1917 regarding the election of the Patriarch were violated in the crudest fashion.

Thus, the convocation of a Council of Bishops became all the more urgent, the more so in that the great number of decisions and appointment of the Synod of Bishops and the Head of the Church required confirmation by the Council of Bishops and, with it, the approval of the entire Church.

Here one ought first of all to point out the "Epistle to the Russian Orthodox People concerning the 'Address of Patriarch Alexis to the Archpastors & Clergy of the So-called Karlovsty Orientation,' of October, 1945" (*Anthology of Selected Writings of His Eminence, Metropolitan Anastasius* [Jordanville, N.Y. 1948], pp. 213-228) in which Metropolitan Anastasius clearly and unambiguously declined Patriarch Alexis' proposal that the Church Abroad subject itself to Moscow. Although this Epistle was addressed to the Russian flock abroad, thus falling within the competence of the Head of the Church, according to the "Temporary Statutes" (V), it was simultaneously an epistle written on behalf of the entire Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (par. III, 3), thus falling within the competence of the Synod of Bishops. Hence, this Epistle was so important for the well-being of the entire Church, that its ratification or rejection by the Council was desirable, the more so as in North America a portion of the Church was ready to enter into negotiations over reunification with Moscow. Furthermore, a whole series of decisions which required the agreement of the Council had been submitted: the consecration of new bishops (Bishops Alexander, Nathanael and John), the exclusion from the Church Abroad of those bishops who had defected to the Patriarchate (Metropolitan Seraphim Lukianov), Bishops Alexis and Macarius), changes in the boundaries of dioceses (the founding of the Diocese of Vienna & Austria, the consecration of Archimandrite Seraphim [Ivanov] as bishop of Santiago & Chile), the elevation of bishops to a higher rank, as well as their appointment as members of the Synod of Bishops, and, finally, the unification of the episcopates of the Byelorussian and Ukrainian Autonomous Churches with the Church Abroad.

At the same time, events in Germany also took a positive turn: early in 1946, the American occupation authorities turned over to the Synod a spacious building at 5 Donaustrasse, in the Bogenhausen area of Munich (this building at present houses the Austrian General Consulate). There was sufficient room in the building for a house church, the Synod's chancery, quarters for the Metropolitan, etc. The new church was dedicated to the Holy Prince Vladimir, Equal of the Apostles. After the transfer of the Synod to the United States, the iconostasis of this church was presented to the Serbian Orthodox Church in Munich as a gift, repaying them in token measure for the assistance the Church Abroad had received from the Church of Serbia. This also served as an expression of the good and close relations between both Churches. Even today the Serbian church in Munich (on Infanteriestrasse), which is dedicated to St. Vladimir, is adorned with this iconostasis.

At one of the last sessions of the Synod of Bishops in Geneva (on 7/20 March 1946) it was decided to evoke an "assembly" of all the bishops residing in Germany, to deliberate upon a whole series of important questions (C.B. 1946, minutes #6). On Pascha of 1946, Metropolitan Anastasius returned



to Munich. On 5/18 April 1946, invitations were sent out to the hierarchs. These invitations, however, spoke not of an "assembly", but of a "Council of Bishops" (C B 1946, #738). Invitations were directed to: Metropolitan Seraphim (Lade) and Panteleimon (Rozhnovsky) the primate of the Byelorussian Church, Archbishops Panteleimon (Radik), Benedict (Bobkovsky), Philotheus (Narko), and Bishops Stephen (Sevbo), Leontius (Filippovich), Eulogius (Markovskiy), Theodore (Rafail'sky), Demetrius (Magan), Athanasius (Marios), Gregory (Bonskevich), Nathanael (L'vov) and Alexander (Lovchy). Metropolitan Anastasius presided (C B 1946, #724-737). In certain sources one sometimes finds reference to sixteen bishops attending. It is possible that this number envisions the participation of Bishop Paul (Meletiev), who, however, was not invited and did not take part in the Council. In 1947 he founded the "Byelorussian Autocephalous Orthodox Church."

How difficult the situation in Germany still was is apparent from the invitations: the accommodation of such a number of bishops entailed considerable hardship. Thus, the invitation was accompanied by the question: "Do you have friends or acquaintance in Munich with whom it would be convenient for you to stay during the Council?"

The Council opened on 26 April/9 May 1946 and lasted for three days. In addition to the fifteen bishops present personally, eleven bishops ratified the decisions of the Council in writing during the following weeks.

The Council's agenda was very broad, since it was confronted not only with the task of reviewing a whole series of the decisions of the Synod of Bishops, but also had to work out extremely important principles for the reorganization of the Church.

After the solemn divine service at the opening of the Council, in which all fifteen invited hierarchs took part, Metropolitan Anastasius delivered a report on the life of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (C B 1946, unnumbered). The Metropolitan pointed out the difficult position of the Synod of Bishops since the outset of the War and emphasized that, with the exception of the Diocese of Germany, practically all contact with the remaining dioceses had been interrupted. Even with Metropolitan Seraphim (Lukianov) in Paris i.e. with the Diocese of Western Europe contact was only occasional and was made in a roundabout way, through the Diocese of Germany. The German authorities placed obstacles in the way of anything that might have benefited the Church. "The German authorities were definitely against our unity." After the evacuation from Belgrade, the Germans hindered the restoration of contacts between the various bishops. "For a long time we had no news of one another." This also continued in the months following the end of the War. Only after relocation in Geneva did the situation change radically since relations with parishes throughout the world could then be restored. The encyclical Epistle he composed in response to Patriarch Alexis' invitation to submit to the Patriarchate could be sent out to parish leaders only after resettlement in Geneva. Unfortunately the bishops in Manchuria had by then already joined the Moscow Patriarchate. In the Diocese of Western Europe only four clergymen joined Metropolitan Seraphim in submitting to Moscow while seventy-five parishes of the Paris Jurisdiction of Metropolitan Eulogius took that step. (For this see *The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, 1945 #9 p. 13 where it says: "We consider

Metropolitan Eulogius and his vicar-bishops, Archbishop Vladimir and Bishop John, with all the seventy-five parishes, united with the Mother Church. Metropolitan Seraphim and the parishes (no indication of number) of his circle are considered reunited with the Mother Church. Further on, the Metropolitan addressed the situation in the Near East, and in North and South America. Describing the critical situation in the United States, where tendencies to unite with Moscow had been noted, he stressed that this step had been taken only by Bishops Alexis and Macarius, while the majority of the bishops were continuing in their loyalty to the Church Abroad. "The unity of the North American bishops with us is a great bulwark for us in the present grievous times."

The Metropolitan did not touch upon the state of the Central European Metropolitan District in more detail, as Metropolitan Seraphim (Lade) was to deliver the report on this.

Immediately after this report the Church Abroad's attitude toward the Moscow Patriarchate was discussed in detail and the Epistle of Metropolitan Anastasius was approved. Furthermore, a resolution of the following content was adopted:

The supreme ecclesiastical administration in Russia, in the person of the present head of the Church in Russia, Patriarch Alexis, has repeatedly appealed to the bishops abroad, urging them to enter into canonical submission to the Patriarchate; but, obedient to our own pastoral conscience, we find it morally impossible to meet these appeals halfway while the supreme ecclesiastical authority in Russia is in unnatural union with the godless regime, and while the entire Church of Russia is bereft of the true freedom inherent to it according to its divine nature.

We do not wish to close our eyes to the fact that the Soviet regime has, since the outset of the War, failed to restore to the Church certain of the legal rights of which it had been deprived. However, the freedom afforded the Church of Russia bears a very limited—and, furthermore, a more outward and seeming rather than genuine and essential—character. This freedom must be bought, moreover, by such obligations imposed by the regime upon the clergy as are inconsistent with the exalted dignity of the Church.

If the communist government in Russia wishes to demonstrate a real respect for the Church of Russia and create normal conditions for its activity, it must provide it with complete freedom for the realization on earth of the calling it has received from on high, and assure it of the position it enjoyed from of old in Orthodox Russia. First and foremost, the regime is obligated to open the gates of the prisons and concentration camps, to free the archpastors and pastors imprisoned there to this day, who have shown themselves to be true confessors of Orthodoxy, and to allow the clergy full freedom to preach the Word of God orally and in writing and to take care for the religious upbringing of the young generations.

Profoundly grieved by the present subordinate position of the hierarchy and clergy in Russia, we do not want to demand of them excessive sacrifices and to lay upon their shoulders a burden beyond their strength to bear; however, we cannot without sorrow fail to point out that the upper hierarchy of the

Church of Russia has taken an incorrect and dangerous path, in that, on the one side, it keeps silence about the truth which is bitter to the Soviet regime, presenting the state of the Church and of society in Russia as other than it is in reality, and forgetting the dictum of Gregory the Theologian, that, in such cases, "silence is a betrayal of God"; and on the other hand, consciously upholds the blasphemous falsehood that the Church is not, and never has been, persecuted by the Bolshevik regime in Russia, and, thus, mocks the feats of suffering of the multitude of hieromartyrs and martyrs whom it dares to compare to political criminals who are subjected to just retribution by the government, it would have us believe.

"This is a truly great sin of blasphemy against their sacred memory and of calumny against our Mother Church, for which the hierarchy, and especially its leaders, will have to give a serious account before God and the tribunal of history

"Paying reverent homage before the image of our great passion-bearers, who have suffered for the Faith and for the truth of God, we earnestly pray for their repose, and for that of many other Russian people, especially for the thousands of prisoners of war who have suffered martyrdom at the cruel hands of the so-called German Nazis. We hope that their sacrifice, and that of others, has not been in vain, and that over their martyrs' bones a new, free Russia will arise, mighty in its Orthodox righteousness and the brotherly love with which it illumined the world of old. Then all its scattered children, without any application of force or compulsion, but freely and joyfully, will rush into its maternal embrace from every quarter. With full awareness of our unbreakable spiritual bonds with our homeland, we fervently entreat the Lord to heal as quickly as possible the wounds inflicted upon our native land by the cruel, if victorious, war, and bless it with peace and all good will" (C.B., 1946. Decision of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, dated 26 April/9 May 1946, see also *Church Life*, 1947, #3-4, pp. 5-6)

The Resolution was approved by all the bishops—even by those who were not personally in attendance at the Council—in particular the North American bishops.

The bishops of the so-called Metropolia joined in endorsing this Resolution, acknowledging the inadvisability of further negotiations with the Patriarchal Church, which was completely under the control of the Soviet regime. Mention in the Resolution of the dependence of the supreme ecclesiastical administration on the regime in the Soviet Union and the Patriarchal Church's lack of freedom were left without alteration. Nevertheless, the North American Metropolia again entered into negotiations with the Patriarchate twenty years later, ultimately receiving "autocephaly" from Moscow—an autocephaly which is recognized only by the Orthodox Churches of the Soviet block, and not by any free Orthodox Church, including the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Metropolia conducted negotiations with an ecclesiastical leadership which D. Pospelovskiy characterizes as follows: "...the Church in the USSR is a genuine, living and vibrant Church (almost miraculously so) and, the patriarch, at least the current one [viz., Pimen], has nothing to do with her spiritual achievements. She lives and gains spiritual victories not because of her patriarch, but in spite of him, by the will of God, Who tolerates the sins and lies of her leading hierarchs because of the redeeming

faith and sacrifices of her flock and of her better pastors" (p. 471). With such an assessment in 1984, the author comes close to the Resolution of the Synod of Bishops of 1946, although he allows himself to pass over the Epistle of 1945-46 as a "sorry degeneration," unaware that his Church endorsed it (p. 268).

However, properly speaking, the import of the resolution lay in the fact that any further departure of parishes to the Patriarchal Church was stemmed. It led even to the return of many parishes and pastors to the Church Abroad, mostly in Europe (among them the parish in Cannes with Archbishop Gregory Osroumov) who had joined Moscow for a period of approximately a half year).

Subsequent sessions of the Council dealt primarily with the reorganization of the Church. First, administrative changes previously adopted by the Synod of Bishops were approved. Archbishop Philotheos reported on the state of the émigrés in the camps and the difficulties between refugees from Byelorussia, the Ukraine and other provinces of the Soviet Union, all of whom were Orthodox. It was pointed out that everything should be done to preserve the unity of the Church. The Council pronounced anathema against a group of Ukrainian nationalists who wanted to form their own independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church (the so-called Autocephalists) (*Church Life*, 1947, #3-4, pp. 1-5). With this in view, the reception of the Byelorussian and Ukrainian episcopates and clergy by the Synod of Bishops was again, deliberately approved. To minister better to the needs of the parishes, it was decided to form vicariates in the individual zones of occupation (*Church Life*, 1947, #1, pp. 2-3). One ought not to forget that by this time almost a million refugees were living in the three zones of Western occupation. If by the end of the War there were fifteen Russian parishes in Germany, their number had risen to eighty parishes by mid-1946, according to information communicated by Metropolitan Seraphim (Lade) at the first diocesan assembly in Germany, held in June of 1946 (*Instructions & Reports*, 1946, p. 3). The number of parishes at this time increased almost daily, amounting to more than a hundred (Seide, op. cit., p. 246). The difficult situation of the refugees was dealt with in a separate memorandum ("Memorandum on the State of the Refugees," C.B. 1946, unnumbered), which was published shortly afterwards in German, Russian, English and French (*Memorandum sur la situation de l'émigration orthodoxe dans le diocèse d'Allemagne*, Munich, 1946).

The Council directed its attention particularly to the religious education of the faithful, especially the young. One should not forget that the majority of the refugees had had almost no contact or no contact at all with the Church in the homeland, since the Church as an organization had been almost destroyed (*ibid.*, 39). The children had not received instruction in the fundamentals of the Faith, rather, they had been brought up in the spirit of Marxism. For this reason, it was decided to arrange instruction in the elements of the Faith and catechetical courses in those refugee camps where such had not already been organized. Bishop Gregory (Boriskevich) gave a lengthy report on the opening of a theological institute in Europe for the training of future priests ("Notes for the Report on the Organization within the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad of a Theological Pastoral Institute in Western Europe," C.B. 1946, unnumbered). The necessity for such an institute arose primarily because the Church had lost her theological school and seminary in Harbin, Manchuria. Furthermore, it no longer had the

possibility of educating future clergymen at the Belgrade Theological Faculty, which it had enjoyed in the period between the Wars. Thus, the founding of its own theological school became imperative, the more so in that there were among the refugees a considerable number of candidates who wished to receive pastoral training. Bishop Gregory proposed a solid program of instruction for the institute when it was founded: four courses of study were envisioned, consisting of some thirty hours of classes per week. Individual subjects followed the teaching plan of the former seminaries in Russia.

However, these plans were not realized in Europe, since there were neither any suitable buildings nor was there any substantial material support. Moreover, the possibility of housing students near some monastery did not exist (the Monastery of St. Job in Munich had not yet been organized). Two years later, Bishop Gregory's plans were realized in the founding of Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville, New York, which has since become the most significant educational institution in the Russian diaspora and has done its best to preserve the ideals of the seminaries which had existed in Russia in the past.

In Germany, the plans were realized only partially: in the Fischbek Camp near Hamburg there were theological courses taught between 1946 and 1948, under the direction of Archimandrite (now Metropolitan) Vitalis, which followed the course of study outlined by Bishop Gregory. With other clergymen of the Camp, Archimandrite Vitalis provided an education for the first priests of the post-War period.

Surveying what has been said, one may with justification call the Council of 1946 "historic." Its special significance lay in the fact that it restored the authority of the bishops within the Church, since it was in a position to cede the agreement of twenty-six bishops. The ecclesiastical administration managed to deflect the pretensions of the Moscow Patriarchate vis-à-vis the emigré parishes and to staunch the flow of parishes from the Church. This was first and foremost thanks to Metropolitan Anastasius, who from Switzerland gathered together his scattered flock over the period of several months. The Council was the completion of the first period of the post-War history in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which thanks to the loyalty of its senior adherents and the confessors' witness of the new refugees of World War II, found itself stronger after the vicissitudes of that difficult time.

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*Translated by Isaac E. Lambertsen from the Russian translation of the German original made by Ludmilla G. Koehler, Ph.D.*

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If you wish to correct someone in his faults or behavior, do not think of correcting him solely by your own means. Rather, cast the burden upon the Lord, and pray to God "Who searches the hearts and reins of all men." Pray with all your heart that God Himself may enlighten the mind and heart of the other person. If He sees that your prayer breathes love and that it comes from the depth of your heart, He will infallibly fulfill the desires of your prayer. You yourself will be able to tell by seeing the change that has taken place in the person for whom you prayed. You yourself will see that it is the work of God.

—St. John of Kronstadt



## THE LIFE OF SAINT STEPHEN THE CONFESSOR, ARCHBISHOP OF SUROZH

*Whose Memory the Holy Church Celebrates on the 15th of December*

Our venerated father Stephen was born in Cappadocia, the Great, of Christian parents, who gave him a good upbringing. From his childhood he excelled in prudence, holding himself aloof from all childish amusements. When he reached the age of seven, his parents gave him over to the study of grammar; he showed himself a gifted student, and in a short time acquired considerable skill in the divine Scriptures. When he attained the age of fifteen, he left his homeland and betook himself to the Imperial City, desiring to complete his education there. This was during the reign of Emperor Theodosius III Adrametenus (715-717) and the holy Patriarch Germanus. There the holy Stephen diligently continued his studies, and, having mastered the disciplines of philosophy, he surpassed many, even his own teachers, so that all marvelled at his erudition.

The holy Germanus, Patriarch of the Imperial City, hearing of Stephen, summoned him to himself, and, giving him his blessing, asked from what country he hailed, and Stephen told him everything about himself. Loving his prudence, wisdom and humility, the Patriarch gave Stephen a place to live in his own residence. The blessed Stephen abode with the Patriarch for several years, serving the Holy Church, practicing abstinence, and living with a pure conscience. Afterwards, unbeknown to anyone, he quit the Imperial City and, arriving at a certain monastery, received the monastic tonsure and struggled in the virtues. Later, desiring a life of yet greater stillness, he left the monastery and, finding a solitary spot unknown to anyone, he dwelt there for a considerable time, serving God in fasting and prayer.

At that time, the bishop who was in the city of Surozh<sup>1</sup> reposed, and the inhabitants of that metropolis went to the most holy Patriarch Germanus in Constantinople, requesting that a bishop be assigned to Surozh. When deliberations were in progress concerning the consecration of a bishop, disagreement arose, since some wanted one man, others another. The citizens of Surozh asked the Emperor and the most holy Patriarch to give them a bishop who would be able to administer the Church well, "for," they said, "heresies have multiplied in our city."

One night, when the holy Germanus was standing in prayer, the angel of the Lord appeared to him, saying, "Tomorrow, go thou to the desolate place where Stephen, the chosen of God, maketh his habitation. Ordain him bishop for Surozh, for he is well able to shepherd the flock of Christ and lead the heretics to the true Faith. I have been sent by God to him also, with the command that he not disobey

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<sup>1</sup>Sagdeia, an ancient Greek city on the southern shore of the Crimea, now known as Sudak.

thee in anything." "Lord," said the Patriarch, "how am I to know the place where Stephen, the elect of God, abideth?" Then the angel, taking one of the Patriarch's servants, showed him the place of the saint's habitation. and the servant, on returning, informed the Patriarch thereof.

Then the same angel of the Lord, arrayed in white garments, appeared to the holy Stephen, who was at that time praying to God in his hiding place. and fear fell upon the saint, and he fell to the ground in terror. Taking the holy one by the hand, the angel quieted him and said: "I am an angel of the Lord and have been sent by Christ the Savior to proclaim joy to thee and to command thee to go to the city of Surozh, to teach the people the Christian Faith. Tomorrow, the Patriarch will summon thee, and, having consecrated thee, will send thee thither as archbishop. Do not disobey him, lest thou anger God." Then, bestowing his peace upon him, the angel ascended to heaven.

The following day, the Patriarch sent two priests and his servant to the holy Stephen, and they led him to the Patriarch with great honor. The Patriarch greeted the holy Stephen with joy and, having consecrated him, appointed him Archbishop of Surozh and put him aboard a ship bound for the diocese entrusted to him.

Arriving in the city of Surozh and ascending the archepiscopal throne, the holy Stephen began to teach the people from the divine Scriptures, and in the course of five years he baptized the entire city of Surozh and all its environs.

By that time, Leo the Isaurian reigned in the Imperial City and had initiated the heresy of iconoclasm, instigated to do so by two Jews. He first commanded that the holy icons be hung up out of reach of the faithful, saying: "Let him who is pure kiss them!" Later, he commanded that the icons be suspended in the air, explaining that icons ought not to be nailed to the wall. And much else did the wretched one undertake against the veneration of the holy icons. The holy Patriarch Germanus admonished him continually to abandon his evil enterprise, discoursing concerning this on the basis of the sacred books. But, enraged by the holy hierarch's admonitions, the iconoclast openly bared his venom, which he had hitherto concealed in his heart, and cast the holy icons out by force, blasphemed them, and dishonored them.

Then Leo sent decrees throughout the city and to many of the surrounding areas, ordering all to treat the holy icons in the same fashion, saying: "If anyone will oppose me, him will I torment with divers tortures and will condemn to death." Then in the Imperial City, one could see the Orthodox Christians subjected to various torments. Patriarch Germanus was placed by the impious Emperor in confinement, and in his place Anastasius, a Syrian by birth, who was of one mind with the Emperor in his heresy, was ordained Patriarch. Then the Emperor and the Patriarch sent envoys to Archbishop Stephen in Surozh, with the ungodly command not to venerate the icons or the Cross. The holy Stephen answered the emissaries, saying: "Let this not be! I will not allow my people to depart from the law

of Christ, I will not obey the commands of either the Emperor or that wretched Patriarch!"

That night, he went to the envoys aboard their ship and sailed with them to Constantinople. And having arrayed himself in the vestments of his hierarchal rank, the holy Stephen appeared before the Emperor. The Emperor asked him "Who art thou?" The saint replied: "I am Archbishop Stephen of Surozh." The Emperor then said: "Seest thou this assembly which sitteth with me in great honor? They have burned the icons with fire and cut them in pieces. Obey me, and thou shalt enjoy the same great honor which they do." But the holy Stephen replied: "Let this not be! Even wert thou to burn me alive, or cut me in pieces, or torture me with any other tortures, I am ready to endure all for the icons and for the Cross of the Lord!" Then said the saint to the Emperor: "In books we have found a certain prophecy, that there will appear in the Imperial City an ungodly emperor, an iconoclast, who will commit the holy icons to the flames. May God not appoint its fulfilment in thy reign!" "And have ye found the name of that emperor?" asked Leo. "His name is Conopus," replied Stephen. Then the Emperor said: "Thou hast truly found my name, Stephen, for my father and mother named me Conopus!" Stephen then said: "O Emperor, let this not happen in thy reign! If thou doest this, thou shalt be the forerunner of the Antichrist!" Hearing this from the saint, the wretched Emperor struck him in the face, lips and teeth with an iron gauntlet, crying: "How darest thou call me the forerunner of the Antichrist!" And the Emperor ordered Stephen seized by the hair and the beard, beaten, dragged along the ground and cast into a dungeon. But while he was dragged along by the tormenters, the saint sent up thanksgiving unto God, and he was cast into a prison where other hierarchs were also incarcerated.

Later the Emperor ordered Stephen brought before him again. "How didst thou dare call me such. O bishop of Surozh?" he said. "Fetch him higher with blows!" The saint stood before the Emperor with seven bishops. Holding in his hands an icon of Christ, the Theotokos and John the Baptist, the Emperor said to the saint: "Why didst thou call me the forerunner of the Antichrist?" The holy one answered: "Because thou doest his works. I have already said this and now repeat it to thee!" Then the Emperor spat upon the icon, trampled upon it, and said to Stephen: "Now do thou likewise to this icon!" But the holy one, shedding tears, said: "Enemy of God, unworthy of a kingdom! How have thy foolish eyes not been blinded and thine iniquitous hands not withered? Let God wrest thy kingdom from thee soon, and let thy life be cut short!" When he heard this, the Emperor in his wrath, ordered the holy Stephen beaten. Afterwards, they bound him to the tail of a horse and dragged him off through the city streets to prison, but the saint only gave thanks to God, and, at the supplications of the saints, the impious Emperor soon died, and his son, Constantine Copronymus, came to the throne. His consort, on hearing of the virtues and miracles of the holy Stephen, pleaded with her husband, the Emperor Constantine, to permit the saint to return to his see. At that time a son was born to the Emperor, and the holy Stephen baptized him. Having bestowed gifts upon Stephen, the Emperor allowed him to return to his flock with great honor. The good pastor sat again upon his throne and long shepherded the flock entrusted to him by Christ. Later, foreseeing his departure to God, he ordained his

clergyman Philaret to be Archbishop of Surozh in his place, and surrendered his soul into the hands of God, on the 15th of December

There was in Surozh a certain man by the name of Ephraim, who was blind from his mother's womb, and whom the holy Stephen helped, giving him food, drink and clothing. Hearing of the repose of his benefactor, he wept, saying, "Who now will care for me? Lead me, that I may kiss his holy feet!" When he was led up to the body of the departed Saint Stephen, he fell at his feet, weeping and lamenting, and suddenly received his sight. By this miracle God made known that His favorite had been numbered with the saints among the choir of the wonderworkers and confessors. With many tears and much honor, his holy body was committed to burial by the hierarchy and all the people of Surozh, to the glory of God Who is glorified and exalted supremely by all forever. Amen.

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Translated from the Russian by Isaac F. Lambertsen from *The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language as Set Forth in the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rustov*, Vol. IV (December) (Moscow: Synodal Press, 1903), pp. 425-430. Copyright, 1985. All rights reserved by the translator.

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In the Church, the priests are like milking kine—the Christian people resemble calves. For as the cows wander through the fields and meadows, and go through vineyards and olive groves, and from the leaves and grass they graze on provide milk for the calves, so priests, assiduously reading the word of God on the wide hills of the Scriptures, should from the herbage that they gather provide spiritual milk for their children. Yet, consider, dearest brethren, how not only do kine seek out their young calves, but these also come running to them, and often so buffet them on the udders with their eager heads, that at times, if the calves are big, they seem to lift their mothers from the ground. But this the mothers suffer for they desire to see their calves grow strong. And this good priests should also desire and seek after, that their spiritual children should press them with questions regarding their own salvation, so that while divine grace is given to the children who as it were buffet them with questions, a divine reward is being prepared for the priests who thus make known unto them the truths of sacred Scripture. I tell you this then that this resemblance may be found both in you and us. For we are eager to suffer from you this longed-for hunger of the soul, so long as we see that your souls grow strong in the love of Christ.

—St. Caesarius of Arles (†543 A.D.)

Would, my dear brethren, that we say this not to our own condemnation, namely, that ~~a~~ who are called by the name of priest, are also named as angels—as the prophet testifies, saying, "For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth," because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 2:7). You likewise can reach to the sublimity of this name, if you so wish. For each one among you, in so far as he is able, in so far as he responds to the grace of heavenly invitation, should he rebuke his neighbor from evil doing, should he seek to encourage him in doing what is good, when he reminds him of the eternal kingdom, or of the punishment of wrong-doers, whenever he employs words of holy import, he is indeed an angel. And let no one say, "I am not capable of giving warning, I am not a fit person to exhort others." Do what you can, lest your single talent unprofitably employed, be required of you with punishment.

—St. Gregory the Great (†603 A.D.)

## THE LETTERS OF ARCHBISHOP THEOPHAN OF POLTAVA AND PEREYASLAVKA

His grace Theophan, Archbishop of Poltava and Pereyaslavka, received his monastic name in memory of the renowned Bishop Theophan the Recluse of Vishenki, whom he greatly revered. The two had a great deal in common and were extraordinarily similar in spirit. Archbishop Theophan was not only a profound theologian in a par with Bishop Theophan the Recluse, but, in addition, he was an unwavering and ardent champion of Orthodoxy, an incorruptible and uncompromising guard of God's Truth, which is held in contempt by so many in our evil times. He, too, gave top priority to spiritual life to the "labor of the mind," as our pious forefathers called it, and to steadfast allegiance to the Holy Fathers. He, too, had a great number of spiritual children, scattered not only throughout all of Russia, but, due to the grievous catastrophe which struck our homeland, they were scattered throughout the whole world as well. If it were possible to gather together all of Vladika Theophan's letters to his spiritual children, they would form voluminous collections of enormous spiritual value. Here we can offer the reader only the few letters which we are fortunate to have at our disposal, plus some excerpts from other letters which are of general interest.

### 1. Answer to a request to be placed under spiritual guidance

Dear Brother in Christ!

I am not what you think I am and I do not have improper ideas about myself. On the contrary, in my own day I also experienced what you are now experiencing. I also understand your spiritual state and your feelings. This is why I am ready and willing to aid you in any way I can. For I remember that it is written in the book of Proverbs, "Where no counsel is, the people fail, but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" [Pr. 11:14]. Thus taught the Holy Fathers also. Personal experience teaches this to everyone who strives. At the present time Christian life has become especially difficult because the enemy's machinations have been extraordinarily multiplied and refined. For this reason everyone who strives for the Lord today must be particularly careful and cautious.

May the Lord rid you of confusion, anxiety, and despondency, and may He comfort you with His heavenly bliss, which we will receive in due time if we keep His law!

Pray for me, that the Lord might likewise direct my steps to the path of truth and peace!

With sincere best wishes,  
Archbishop Theophan

8/7/1927  
Sofia

## 2. Various paths to salvation and the essence of monasticism

Dear Brother in Christ!

Thank you for your warm greetings. In my own day, when I was studying in the Academy, I went through a state like the one that you are now experiencing. What shall I tell you about it? If we turn to the lives of the Saints we see that they all approached one goal by means of the most varied paths. Some were saved in the world, others in the desert. Some were devoid of education, others were superbly educated. Therefore we should not be troubled because we live in the world and do not shun education. We shall merely try to live according to God's will everywhere and in all situations.

"They say as I have heard," said St. Nicetas Stethatos, "that it is impossible to acquire virtues without withdrawing some distance and running away into the desert, and I was surprised that they had taken it upon themselves to determine a location for that which is indeterminable. For if proficiency in virtue is the restoration of the soul's strengths to their primordial nobility and the integration of the main virtues for the proper functioning of the soul according to its nature, then this does not come to us from without, as something foreign, but as something inborn in us from creation, through which we enter the Kingdom of Heaven which is, according to the word of the Lord, in us. Thus the desert is superfluous and we can enter the Kingdom without it, through repentance and the keeping of the commandments. Thus it is possible that God's dominion can be present in any place, as the divine David sang, 'Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of His dominion' (Ps. 103:22)." (First Century, 72, Dobrotolyubie, v. 5, p. 109). Thus it is possible to be a monk in the world also, according to the very words of St. Nicetas Stethatos.

"Being a monk does not mean being away from people and from the world, but it does mean keeping away from the desires of the flesh and fleeing to the desert of passions (i.e., entering dispassion) in order to renounce oneself. When a great man, whom I mentioned to you previously (Abba Arsenius), was told: 'run from people and you will save yourself' this was said precisely in this sense. For we see that even after he had fled from the world, he settled among people, traveled through populated places, and lived with his followers. But at the same time he diligently maintained inner retreat from sensual relations and he never suffered any harm from being among people. Another of the great Fathers (St. Macarius) made this appeal when leaving an assembly of run brothers. And when they asked him what they should run from, he pointed to his lips." (First Century, 76, Dobrotolyubie, v. 5, p. 111).

"Every way of life is blessed in all dealings and actions carried out for God's sake and according to God," said Symeon the New Theologian (Chapters, 100; Dobrotolyubie, v. 5, p. 37).

Therefore, in principle and according to the teachings of the Holy Fathers, there is no need to be despondent if due to the conditions of our life we are forced to seek salvation, even in the monastic order, in the world. I will, however, write a separate letter about how this is accomplished in practice.

Sincerely devoted to you,  
Archbishop Theophan

8/14/1927, Sofia

### **3. Various paths in monasticism and the study of theology**

Dear Brother in Christ'

I wrote to you, basing my words on the Holy Fathers, that it is possible not only to seek salvation, but even to be a monk in the world. Of course many who wish to seek salvation go to monasteries, but scholarly monks are given an obedience by the Church to work out their salvation in the world. Not only has this practice been established by the authority of the Church, but the elders also bless this path. I myself remember that I sought to enter a monastery after finishing the program at the Academy. But the great and sagacious elders among whom I found myself (Alexis, Barnabas and Isidore), did not bless my doing so at that time. They said that it was not God's will and that the time would come for me to enter a monastery if I so desired. Likewise will I tell you, my friend, that you must not enter a monastery at this time. You will not find what you are looking for in a monastery. You will not find the appropriate guidance and you will be subjected to great temptations. In a monastery you would be forced to perform heavy manual labor which, in view of your poor health, would be beyond your strength. Instead, consider your study of theology to be your obedience. You will not find this obedience unprofitable. It will deliver you from many temptations and, if intelligently directed, it will prepare the foundation for spiritual life as well. You will have an opportunity to study the Holy Scriptures and Holy Fathers. It is not possible to do this in the monasteries abroad. The libraries there are either non-existent or very poor. In addition, there is not much time for studying in one's own cell. Of course, however, even when taking courses in theology one needs certain guidance — both scholarly and spiritual. I know that the living conditions in the student dormitory make it hard on you. But it is possible, after all, to soften the blow of this aspect of your affairs somewhat. The Lord gave you certain abilities and if you study theology diligently in accordance with these abilities, then these abilities will certainly be properly applied. It is, of course, necessary to cut off all vainglorious thoughts, but the exertion of one's abilities with the desire to satisfactorily master a subject does not in and of itself consuate vainglory. It is also necessary to beware of the opposite extreme — the weakening of the spirit which comes from the evil one.

Archbishop Theophan

8.15/1927

Sofia

### **4. Becoming a monk, spiritual guidance and fasting during illness**

Honorable Brother in the Lord

I have just returned to Sofia from the Synod and I hasten to reply to your letter of August 19th.

A year ago you wrote: "I had a strong desire to be tonsured in our church and to live in the church

vesabule serving as watchman and Reader. Now it seems to me that this would not have been right. " You are absolutely correct in thinking so at this time. It is necessary that both tonsure and the time immediately after tonsure be spent in an environment devoid of worldly experiences and, in particular in a location distant from one's parents. This custom has been legitimized by the practices of holy ascetics and makes good sense. Its sense lies in the fact that a monk must free himself of all familial influences on his spiritual life and must live exclusively under the guidance of his spiritual directors. This does not mean that one should forget one's parents altogether: of course one should always pray for them and show them respect and goodwill, except when they stand in the way of salvation.

I am now reading Abba Dorotheos' "you continue and ask, can I apply everything that he writes as myself to my own behavior or not?" My answer: you must do everything, especially when you are just beginning, according to the blessing and advice of your spiritual director. This is not because what is written is incorrect, but because beginners might not understand it entirely correctly. That which was written by Abba Dorotheos was written very simply, however the spiritual meaning of his writing is not simple, but rather very profound.

"The following," you state, "troubles me a great deal: my poor health forces me to undergo medical treatment and to maintain an increased diet, but the Fathers demand abstinence." Everything must be done according to reason. The Fathers of the Church teach not only abstinence but necessary care for the body as well, so that it will not be weakened and will not become an obstacle to virtuous deeds.

"Do not grieve because you cannot fast during illness," said St. Barsanuphius the Great. "Cherishes not demand that anyone perform labors beyond his strength. Moreover, what is a fast, if not a punishment for the body intended to humble a healthy body and make it weak for the passions, according to the words of the Apostle: 'For when I am weak, then I am strong.' Moreover, illness is a greater punishment than fast. It takes the place of fasting and is of even greater value. Whoever endures it with patience, thanking God, already receives the fruit of his salvation through patience. Instead of weakening the strength of the body by fasting, it is already weakened by illness. Thank God that you have been freed from the labor of fasting. Even on your illness days do not be sad, will not be condemned for this since you are not doing this on the merits of your own intelligence." (Dobrotolivi hier. v. 2. Instructions of Barsanuphius the Great 43).

I suffer from the same illness as you do. I have been ill nearly my whole life and I recently found Calat. The golden words of St. Barsanuphius the Great console me greatly. May they console you as well, dear friend!

Archbishop Theophan

8/31/1927  
Sofia



## 5. The causes of the schism in our Church Abroad

Greatly respected Fr Archimandrite!

I will answer your questions. The Reverend Benjamin has written to you about the division of the Church that "Our attitude in Paris is a 'Tikhonite' one. It is the proper attitude of the Church and is non-extremist." I must say the following in response to this. The Reverend Benjamin was not at the Council of Bishops and is speaking *a priori* in order to justify his position. Metropolitan Eulogius was at only one purely informal session of the Council of Bishops and is also independently expressing his own view in order to justify himself. The real causes of the division are deeper than it seems at first glance. Two of them are especially significant. "They" recognize the Soviet authorities as "ordained by God," but we consider them Antichristian. On the basis of overwhelming documentary evidence, we recognize that the YMCA is a Masonic organization. They consider it a Christian organization. They call themselves "Tikhonites," but we call ourselves members of the true universal Orthodox Church. They recognize Patriarch Tikhon as their greatest authority and for this reason they even accept his errors. We also honor Patriarch Tikhon, but we do not accept his errors. For us the universal Church is the highest, as it is expressed by the Ecumenical Councils and in the works of the Holy Fathers of the Church. According to our convictions, it is necessary to conduct an active struggle with the enemies of the Church and of God's people. In their opinion, the Bolsheviks must be conquered with "love." According to their logic, even the devil must be conquered with "love." They have perverted the meaning of the Council's resolutions! The Council resolved, for example, that Russian Christian students' groups should bear the title "Orthodox." They find this an insulting constraint! They are afraid to be called "Orthodox!"

Judge for yourself where the truth lies!

On August 27 (Old Style) there will be an important meeting of the Synod concerning the schism of the Church. According to a telegram from Metr. Anthony, Rev. Seraphim and I will go to Karlovtsy for the meeting of the Synod. There we will meet with Archbishop Vladimir and Bp. Benjamin. We will have some serious conversations!

May the Lord grant that all of this disturbance in the Church have glory to God as its result!

Archbishop Theophan

8/21/1926

Sofia

## 6. The Church schism and its aim to "reform Orthodoxy"

Honorable Fr. Archimandrite:

Such are our affairs in the Church. Metropolitan Eulogius will not give in. Those around him are pushing him toward schism. We could let him have his way, but we cannot entrust the fate of Orthodoxy to him. He is ensnared in the nets of the YMCA. The YMCA in turn is having a demoralizing effect on student groups. In the magazine "The Path" No. 5 Professor Berdyaev stated openly that the schism in the Church is unavoidable and necessary. Metropolitan Filaret is the only Orthodox hierarch who "has raised his consciousness to the realization that it is necessary to reform Orthodoxy," and he is therefore "a tool of God's Providence" in our days! Once again they are trying to hide high and Patriarch Tikhon's name and his decree! They are taking advantage of the fact that he is no longer among the living and that he cannot raise his voice against the pursuits of the new "reformers of Orthodoxy." There has not yet been any formal rupture, however. A definitive judgement of Metropolitan Eulogius' actions will be put forth at the meeting of the Synod on January 13th.

Archbishop Theophan

8/26/1926; Sofia

The Bulgarian Synod has spoken out against the YMCA. It is worth mentioning that there is a noticeable anti-YMCA sentiment even among Bulgarian theology students. One of them, an unusually fine young man, visited me the other day to warn me and to tell me about this.

## 7. Unsuccessful attempts to restore unity in our Church

Honorable Fr. Archimandrite:

Heartfelt thanks to you for your holiday greetings. You asked me for some news. Archbishop Anastasius has arrived from Paris. Metropolitan Eulogius summoned him there. Negotiations for peace were held, but they were unsuccessful. According to Archbishop Anastasius it is still possible to deal with Metr. Eulogius. He is, however, entirely controlled by his associates, who clearly have schism as their goal. The "Neo-Orthodox" have built themselves a solid nest in Paris. They feel defeated, but do not want to admit it. In addition to the open letter which Metropolitan Sergius sent to all hierarchs abroad, he also sent a private letter to Metropolitan Eulogius. In this letter Metropolitan Sergius condemned Metropolitan Eulogius' activities and gave the existence and activities of the Council and Synod of the Church Abroad his approval. The Russian "renovationists" recognize Metropolitan Eulogius as their accomplice and curse us. The Bolsheviks demanded that Metropolitan Sergius anathematize us, but the latter refused and as a result was imprisoned. In Russia we are regarded as "the stronghold of Orthodoxy."

Have you read the last epistle of our Synod? I composed it. According to E. I. Makharobadze it "is making a wonderful impression" throughout the provinces. This is all the news for now.

Archbishop Theophan

4/7/1927; Sofia

*Translated from the Russian by Antonina Janda; further selections in subsequent issues*

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"No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" [Lk 9:62]. For just as the husbandman, who has begun to break up his land by the plough, if he grow weary, and leave his labor half done, sees not his field set with ears, nor his threshing-floor full of sheaves, and suffers of course the loss which is the natural result of idleness; the absence, I mean, of produce, and the consequent penury, and incurs also the ridicule of those that see him; so he who wishes to cleave unto Christ, but does not bid farewell to the things of the world, and abandon all love of the flesh, and even deny his earthly relatives; for by so doing he attains to a resolute courage in all praiseworthy pursuits; is not fit for the kingdom of God. One who cannot attain to this resolution, because his mind is fettered with indolence, is not acceptable unto Christ, nor fit for His company, and necessarily is refused permission to be with Him.

—St. Cyril of Alexandria